

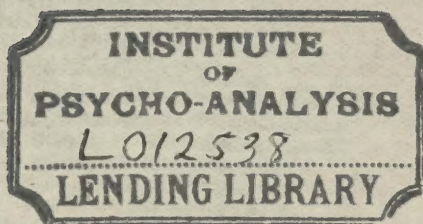
MARIE BONAPARTE

TOPSY

THE STORY OF A GOLDEN-
HAired CHOW



TOPSY



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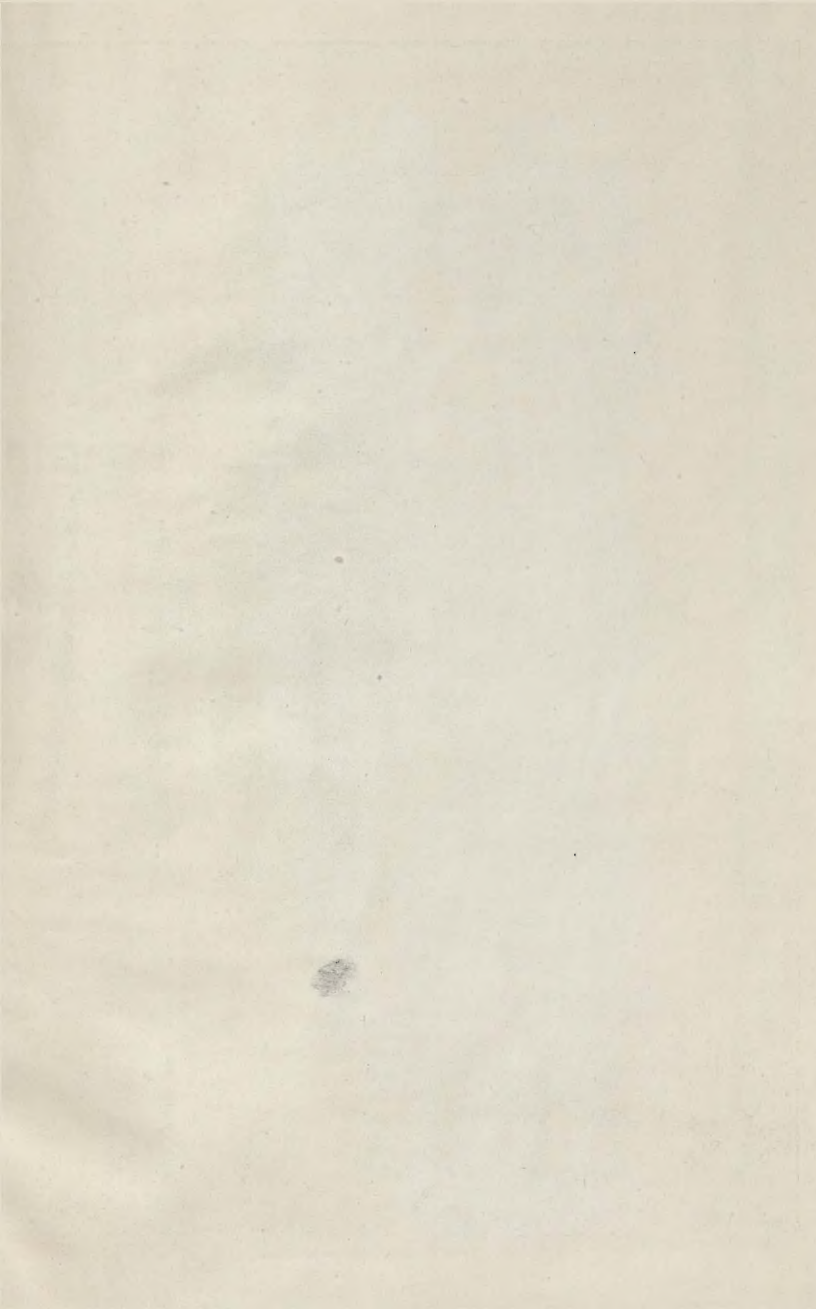
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MARIE BONAPARTE

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TOPSY

The story
of
a golden-haired chow

Translated from the French by
PRINCESS EUGENIE OF GREECE

THE PUSHKIN PRESS
LONDON

INSTITUTE
OF
PSYCHO-ANALYSIS

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PROLOGUE

IN DOGLAND

IN spite of the wish of my husband and daughter to have dogs, I refused to do so for over fifteen years.

As long as children are still small, I would say, close contact in a house with pets is unhealthy and dirty. In bygone days, as a grown child, then as a young girl, I myself had had a dog, a funny little smooth-haired fox-terrier, whom I loved so much that when one spring day, in the South of France, he died, the brightness of the sun, of the flowers was dimmed for a few days.

Watching my growing children, I would think: Why thus squander my heart away? Have we not sorrows enough on earth, which come to us through human beings, from children, without creating others by adopting dogs? In spite of the regret of my husband and daughter, I banished the small companions from the house.

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But at sixteen my daughter underwent a long illness, and courage then failed me to deny her that for which she was forever imploring. The first invader to enter our house was an old English sheep dog, with long fluffy grey hair, and later, two little white dogs.

My husband then declared that he also would, at last, have his dog, and so he acquired the fawny splendour of a chow-chow with black tongue and thick golden hair. In this way Tatoon, descendant of the dogs of North China, and of those that are said to be eaten in Canton, came to haunt the steps of our house like some flamboyant dragon from the Far East.

He was soon given a mate of his race, and chow-chow puppies, golden balls of hair, rolled about in charming frolics on the gravel of the garden.

In this way Teaupi, familiarly called Topsy, the female chow whose name these humble pages bear, was born and grew up in our house.

★ ★ ★

The big grey dog now lies buried, also one of the little white dogs, and Chiki too, the mother chow-chow. There now remain alone in our town house Tatoon grown old, and his daughter Topsy.

★ ★ ★

For over four years, as I passed the entrance in going in and out of the house, I would brush by the golden hair of the two canine lares. I liked them for their beauty, their hieratic calm, seated there like little lions, with paws nobly extended and half-closed eyes. But Topsy, the young female, was the more affectionate, and when my daughter once left for a long time, she became my own companion, and even in some small degree took the place of the absent one. I would take her, more and more often, from Paris, to the big garden where I was born, at St. Cloud, over there on the hill beyond the woods and the river. A kind of intimacy grew up between us. When I left on a journey, however, I felt she might be an encumbrance, and so without regret I would leave her for weeks, and sometimes for months.



But one winter morning, when I myself was ill, the kind young servant who combed and looked after her showed me a small growth under her right lip. Topsy was taken to the veterinary surgeon and operated on. And this time she was good, and remained motionless, she, who formerly, with the strong and fierce character of her race, had never allowed him to come near. The

pathological specimen, preserved in a bottle of formalin, was given to me for a histological examination, for the surgeon had said that perhaps—only perhaps after all—a malignant growth was to be feared.

One of my friends, doctor and biologist, took charge of the sections. The definite histological answer would take some time to come. There, as I waited, in my woman's heart, more specially isolated that year than ever before, a passionate affection, all of a sudden, declared itself for Topsy, who, until now, had been but a graceful toy to me. May be because she was going to be taken away from me, because I felt, without wanting to believe it, that her life, Life itself, was threatened in her, that I started to love her so strangely and fiercely, and to dread her death, her possibly imminent death, as the greatest misfortune.

THE SENTENCE

TOPSY's sentence has been pronounced: under her lip, which is again swelling, there is a lympho-sarcoma, a tumour that will develop, grow, spread elsewhere, ulcerate, suffocate her, and condemn her in but a few months to the most atrocious of deaths.

POOR TOPSY!

SHE looks at me with eyes overflowing with love. It was in this same town-garden that as a puppy, a small ball of golden hair, she gambolled about, biting her brothers and sisters, and her mother's teats.

She looks at me with eyes overflowing with love. What landscape memories of other scenes lie hidden behind those eyes? The snow of Switzerland in which she rolled about for a whole winter, that crisp snow that reminds dogs from North China of the cold ancestral air? Or else the dappled shade of that other garden of mine, the great garden of St. Cloud, that paradisiacal universe of dogs, where mice run under the ivy from tree to tree, mice that a single crunch turns into a tiny docile toy? There too, crossing the shade and the light of the underwood, a squirrel or cat will at times awake the archaic hunting instincts. Then, with lifted head, and barking, for hours the dog will stand at the foot of the tree in which its prey has sought for refuge.

She looks at me with eyes overflowing with love, and my own overflow with tears. For soon, no doubt, mice, squirrels and cats will be able to run about in

peace. They can do so now! For I dare no longer take Topsy to St. Cloud. The tumour under her lip, which has grown and spread till now it is inside her right nostril, from day to day deforms and obstructs it ever more, so that now she cannot run down the paths or through the grass without sneezing and sneezing again and again like the sound of a death knell. Alas, poor little Topsy, shall we soon have to bury her under the soil of the garden she loved so much, there to sleep, wrapped and enfolded in the shroud of her golden coat?

IMPLORATIONS TO THE GOD OF THE RAYS

SOMEWHERE in Paris there is a huge house where steel apparatus of a fiendish appearance glitters in the dim light of armour-plated rooms. They produce mysterious rays which sometimes heal poor human suffering from the most horrible of all diseases. Why have I not yet interceded for Topsy with the god who reigns over these realms?

Had Topsy been human, I should have already been to him. But I hesitated to disturb him, in spite of his friendship towards me, for Topsy is only a poor dog.

Yet life, august life, also dwells in her humble body. Why this distinction, which even I seem to accept, between a dog and a human being? Topsy, if she can be healed, has as much right to life as I.

At last I dared take Topsy to the divinity of the Rays. He said one could try to cure her.

TOPSY BENEATH THE MAGICAL RAYS

WITHOUT a struggle, and only a few groans, she let them tie her on to the plank, her paws outstretched and her head muffled up in a hood like a tortured being. For a whole hour the thundering rays bombarded her head, while I walked up and down close by. Perhaps the tumour is radio-sensitive: we shall know in a week. Maybe the hardening in Topsy's nose will melt away and disappear.

But there is still the rest of her body! If the illness should break out again anywhere else, all my life I shall feel I was to blame, and that I should not have waited a single day in taking her to the god of the Rays.

★ ★ ★

While the kind young man who cares for Topsy calms her with his voice, I, alone in the small adjoining room, am haunted by memories. Twelve years ago another body also lay under the rays: my father, whom a similar affliction, though differently placed, was

destroying. But then I knew that the rays penetrated him in vain day after day; the effect, I knew, would not be lasting; the same divinity reigning over them had warned me. In my thoughts, in my memories, I hear the cries of my father, day and night his heart-rending moans, as the inexorable disease worked deeper and deeper into his body. Morphia alone gave him a few hours' respite. Topsy, the little dog, happier than him whom I loved so much, will she be saved by the magic of the rays?



TOPSY SLEEPING

TOPSY AND I IN THE GARDEN

EVERY other day Topsy's golden head is placed beneath the rays, which maybe will save her. Meantime, since it is lovely May, I take her out with me into the big garden of St. Cloud.

Here we are alone under the verdant shade, while at my feet, one paw extended in the chow-like manner, or lying quite relaxed on her side, she sleeps. I look at her, and at the same time listen to the rustling of the leaves and the songs of the birds.

Sleeping Topsy, ignorant of death, listen! listen! We are not alone in the big garden: birds are singing, the nests are full of eggs or little heads pressed close together, insects are humming, ants are hurrying along the earth, plants are breathing, their green leaves sprouting in the May air, the grass in the meadow has grown, and is strewn with buttercups and daisies. It is all living, Topsy, like you, like me, and will go on living after us.

Whether Topsy's head alone conceals the mortiferous cells, and the rays have cured her, or whether further down, under her golden coat, the death dealing

cells, borne by her bright red blood, have grafted themselves on her breathing lungs, what difference after all does it make? Dogs live ten, twelve, fifteen years, and Topsy is already five years old. Five years more or less, perhaps nine, and Topsy's body will be laid just the same, just the same, in the earth, beneath the grass.

And my fate is the same. Ten years more or ten years less! My hair is growing grey; many a time have I seen the coming of spring. . . . If then, Topsy, some illness similar to yours, or some other, to-morrow, or in ten years, should attack me, the garden in which I grew up, the garden in which you will sleep, but from which I shall then be exiled—for people—less fortunate than dogs—are forbidden to sleep under the soil of their homes, the garden with the big acacias, the large chestnut trees, forgetful of you and of me, will nevertheless blossom and re-blossom just the same.

Topsy, we are not alone in the big garden. The life that animates me, that still animates your golden body, is not the only one! There are birds, there are insects, there are flowers, and even, when you spare their tiny lives, there are mice under the ivy.

TOPSY, MY TERRESTRIAL SISTER

WE live in the same house, Topsy, with its roof either blue or grey, according to the weather, or at night constellated with little lights. We see the same huge fiery lamp rise each morning; the same cold light increases and decreases at night as the month waxes or wanes. . . The same forests, with their halls of pillared trees and ceilings of verdure, the same meadows of this earth like carpets patterned with flowers and insects, are meant for your light paws as well as for my heavier feet. The same musicians, the birds of the sky, play to us.

What difference can it make to the sisterly feeling I bear you if to all this you feel otherwise than I? The air we breathe is the same in truth, penetrated by the same fragrance of gardens and woods, though you doubtless enjoy them physically more than I, your doggy sense of smell being more acute than my poor human one. Better than I, you savour the soft scent of the earth from which grass springs and daisies bloom, but I am com-

pensated by my soul's understanding of the poetry that is spring and the march of the seasons. . . .

Despite the gulf that separates our races, Topsy, you are still my sister, my terrestrial sister. A same red blood flows in your arteries and veins pulsating from a same heart; a same warm life intoxicates us of a morning when the sun calls us out. At our meals we share the same tasty flesh from the same victims, the same ground flour from the same corn gilded by the same sun, be it kneaded into bread or Italian paste; that same sugar which sweetens my tea, you crush with delight between your greedy teeth. Your light paws and my arms and legs are controlled by the same muscles. At nightfall, tired by our activities of the day, a similar weariness, mounting to our brain from our muscles, our blood, our nerves, forces us each to lay those weary muscles on a bed or low cushion, to close our eyes, and sink into the same blissful slumber. A same death, one evening of ultimate weariness, will lay us in the earth.

CHILDLESS TOPSY

WE still do not know whether Topsy will be cured or not. The swelling of her lip has subsided, but further down in her body, will the disease begin again?

Topsy, little spark of life, why, when miraculous life was yours, did you always, whenever the life-giving cells were stirring in your loins, obstinately squat down and bare your teeth, repelling the approaches of the male?

Now the illness is in you, and never again, should you be cured, shall I take your head and your loins in my arms, to try and persuade you to receive the male. Never will you know the happiness of small paws, of small greedy lips upon your teats, and when you lie down under the earth of the garden to sleep for ever above you, amid the flowers and the grass, no little ones, born of you, will be playing.

I, Topsy, have given two scions to the human race. I have passed on the life I received; not you.

OUR ANCESTORS AND OUR DESCENDANTS

I KNOW about many of my ancestors, but on two or threesides, beyond my grand-parents, do not know from whom I descend. On this subject, I know little more than Topsy.

Topsy, who were your remote forefathers? Further than any pedigree can go, on what day, on what ship, did white pirates carry away your black-tongued, golden-haired ancestors from the shores of China? And earlier still, what was the life of the ancestors of these migrating forefathers, red or fair chow-chows, and at the feet of which monks, in what Chinese monastery, did they sit?

They say that, in the monasteries over there, only the blue chow-chows are considered noble, and that the red are those of the poor, whose houses they guard, and that they eat them, as also the black, in Canton, for magical purposes. And did your ancestors hunt wolves, and did they draw sledges over the snow? I do not know.

All I know is that I love your golden hair, and that you became my constant companion as my children, grown up, went away more and more often. Life, tragic and normal, means that one's children grow remoter from one just when the parents are growing old. Parents, when young themselves, have their lives filled with other emotions besides love for their children, and no doubt the children often suffer in silence. But later, when our lives are ebbing away, our children seem to hit back at us; jealous life progressing draws them away from us. . . . Thus Time marks His passing.



And so, on certain days, Topsy seemed to pair off with me, and we made a kind of unique self-absorbed couple, and the garden walls shut in our close happiness.

Far away, nations might clamour threateningly, money markets collapse, but you knew nothing of it all. The newspapers on the little table by my side, at the foot of the chestnut tree, told of this. If I read them but little, for you they were merely rubbish which you hardly noticed.

That is why your presence, in the sun-streaked shade of the garden, was so calm and so comforting to me.

Dogs are ignorant of the extent and the bitterness of human quarrels, their quarrels being limited and short-lived. True, I was forced to lock up in the enclosure next door the beautiful chow-mongrel, your niece, whose coat, as golden as yours, envelops the slender figure of the Alsatian. For the moment you saw her, all your hair would jealously stand on end, and your teeth and furious voice begin to threaten. Good dogs are not always good. But Topsy, like the trees and the flowers around us, knew nothing of the complications of human quarrels, and only knew how to love me.

It is this humble communion of Topsy, the little dog, with me, the ageing woman, that nature, as with a lightning flash, came to disturb the day, the morning, when, under her right lip, I felt a little hardening.

MAGICAL DOG

WE still do not know whether Topsy is cured.

I loved you before, Topsy, but not as I do now you are ill.

You have become, for me, a magical dog.

When you are laid down beneath the grassy incline which slopes away on the other side of the road, who will guard my door at night?

The shade of the big garden is full of hostile powers. There may be there, under the nocturnal trees, prowlers who have scaled the walls of the garden, thieves who will try to force the door of the house. Who will warn me, when you are gone?

The shade of the big garden at night is full of even more redoubtable powers: under the nocturnal trees seem to roam the ghosts of those that are gone—my mother, my dead mother, who wants her child back; my dead father come back to claim me. When you are gone, Topsy, who will guard me from these ghosts?

My life, like yours, Topsy, is declining, and when

you will no longer be guarding the door of my room,
it will be Death, the roaming Death that prowls in the
garden, who will, perhaps, come into my house, into
my room.



IN THE MEADOW

TOPSY'S HEART

JUNE has come, with days full of warmth.

In between each treatment which she undergoes every two or three days, I take Topsy back to St. Cloud in the evening.

Topsy, having slept the whole night in the passage, against my door, as soon as I wake I open the other door for her, the big glass one, the one downstairs which opens on to the garden steps, and immediately Topsy rushes off in circles over the grass. I shut the door behind her and go upstairs again to get ready to go out in the garden too. Then, very soon, from downstairs, small groans and yelpings can be heard. It is Topsy calling me, seated quite close to the glass door of the house.

For Topsy is not like her old father, the independent male, in his impenetrable forest of red hair. Topsy is not like her small companion, the playful little white fox-terrier, who is jumping about even now in the grass. For these two, the garden, with its coppices, its ivy, its wood-mice, its pathways, its small fields, is a joy in itself; for Topsy, the affectionate chow, the garden,

in spite of all its sun, its coppices and its small fields, means nothing without me.

Topsy cries until I come. Answering her call, I soon come down the staircase, and, as soon as I see her from the top of the stairs, through the glass door, wisely sitting leaning against it, I see her eyes deepen and her tail wag. She knows I am going to open the door, that she will come in: she will jump up at me and will quickly go up to lie down on top of the staircase, to wait until I am ready. For Topsy prefers the inside of the house with me to all the fairyland of the big garden, even though it be a dog's paradise.

But, if I go out, taking with me my daily work to my shelter under the trees, Topsy, happier still, will follow me. There she will sit, proudly erect on her front paws, watching the depths of the coppice, while I write things, trace signs on paper that no dog can read, even though I may be writing about them. The world in which the thoughts of humans dwell is impenetrable to dogs. But the bond which joins my woman's heart to Topsy's doggy one is none the weaker for that. That is why I love to have her at my feet, in the house or in the garden, and why the garden, without me, is not enough for her.

If, some day, that ill which entered into her, and

which seems for some time at least to have been charmed away by the magical rays, should break out here or there, under her golden coat, the only merciful action would be to put her to sleep for ever. Even were she able to live on some few months longer without too much pain, we, human beings who think, would without a doubt, be too afraid of the illness that her poor lungs might cough up, to keep her in our rooms next to us. I would fear for myself, for my children, the disease whose origin is unknown, which never pardons. Then, if we did not wish to put Topsy at once to death, we should be forced to banish her far away, perhaps to the large garden of St. Cloud, alone with the little white fox-terrier, who loves the garden enough to live there always, out of doors, happy without us. But Topsy loves us too much not to perish of sorrow, as much as of her illness, in the great garden, without her daily ration of love, which no food can replace. It would be better, Topsy—if you understood I am sure you would agree—that upon awaking one morning, I should take you with me in the car, and, stroking your head, bring you to the place where, without pain, you would be given eternal sleep. You would then be carried, asleep, to the foot of our garden, on the other side of the road, to the incline that slopes down to the hawthorn and

syringa bushes. If, in the morning, you could no longer get up, shaking off the earth that would cover you, to come and cry at my door, to beg for admittance into my house, at least you would never have known the sorrows of separation. And you would be sleeping after all not far away.

TOPSY'S EMACIATED BODY

WILL Topsy recover or not? In any case, her body is growing thinner and thinner.

Perhaps the rays have not saved her after all, and as I contemplate her, lying at my feet, her emaciated flanks heaving and breathing, oppressed by the summer air, I think sadly that next summer the garden may have lost its familiar genius.

Morning after morning, Topsy is taken to the Temple of the Rays, her thin body is fastened to the plank, her head muffled in the hood, the right side of her muzzle in the invisible cone; but, do what one will, and in spite of her patience and the power of the rays, under Topsy's right lip the little tumour seems obstinately persistent, and even ready to start afresh. Her lip is swelling again.

All that the rays have given Topsy, maybe, is one more summer in the garden.

Before the autumn leaves have started falling, Topsy may have gone to sleep on the slope over there, beyond the road, under the falling leaves.

★ ★ ★

No other dog will run with me, Topsy, in the garden next autumn or next spring. The spectre of death shall not pass before me again. No, not before my death, or that of the human beings I love! And, as a dog's life is so short, to have one, to love one, is, if one still is young enough, gratuitously to invite Death into one's house.

In this way Topsy, my pretty live toy, from a flippancy joy, has suddenly become the tragic messenger of the most atrocious of deaths—the death my father suffered, and which I myself may possibly suffer some day. Death by cancer.

Run in the garden, poor thin little Topsy, as long as you still can run! Jump over the branches which the storm, the other evening, pulled off the trees and laid on the paths! The leaves on the fallen branches wither, you too will soon be faded!

LETHAL LULL'ABY

IF Topsy cannot recover, I shall choose for her the sweetest of deaths.

This haunts me: I imagine, I picture, with fearful intensity, the future day of her death.

★ ★ ★

Eat, Topsy, eat without distrust, the food that I myself have prepared for you to-day. Look: there is no bread in it to-day, only the liver and the meat that you love so much. You will not notice the inodorous white powder that I have mixed with it.

This is the powder, Topsy, which makes one sleep, dogs as well as people. Men and women, suffering from insomnia, take a pinch of it to pass the night, asleep, until dawn. Men and women, when they are sick of life, take more, to try to sleep, and sleep without waking.

That is the dose that I have given you, Topsy. For why should you wake? To feel the malignant tumour which your deceased mother, who also died of cancer, may have left you, grow from day to day under your

lip? To be able to breathe no longer, your nostrils day by day more obstructed by the atrocious spongy mass? No longer to be able to eat, the greatest of all doggy joys? For your soft lip to ulcerate, and gradually dissolve into pus and stench? No more to be able to chase cats and rats, or, when the sun is shining, run about under the leaves of the woods?

That is why, Topsy, my last loving act towards you was to prepare this meal, this sweet and treacherous meal, which will put you to sleep for ever.

Your eyes will soon grow heavy, your poor eyes that the rays have already bared of their lashes, and I, whom you have loved so much, will fade away in a mist. Maybe under your closed eyelids you will dream one moment longer. You will see, tawny huntress, the field-mice you chased through the woods. You may see the snow of the mountains in which you rolled as a puppy. Then, as your slumber deepens, you will dream no more, as you enter, your slowing heart still beating, into nothingness.

Then, when you are thus sound asleep, I shall pick you up myself in my arms, like a child, and burdened with this load of ultimate love, I shall carry you to the waiting car. For your sleeping form might haunt the house; your corpse I could not bear.

And the car, which so often brought you barking to the joy of the large garden, would roll towards the laboratory where you would exhale your last breath.

We should arrive, we should take you out of the car, we should carry you, more and more soundly sleeping, to the table. And the veterinary surgeon whom you loved so little—prophetic little dog—would come near you. You would no longer defend yourself against him, you would be sleeping so well!

Without even trying to bite him, you would let him insert into the vein of your leg, for the last time stretched out behind you in the chow-like manner, the needle of the full syringe. And the lethal liquid would rush into your vein.

I should stroke your head, though you would not be able to feel it, during the time—a few seconds?—needed to stop your already slowing heart. The man would then feel your chest and say “It is over”.

Over! My strolls in the woods, with my beloved little dog. Finished, the long nights, with her vigilantly sleeping at my door. Finished the petting, finished the loving. I shall leave alone—no, with the kind-hearted young man, who too will be there, and who, like myself, will doubtless be crying.

People may say it is too much to cry for a poor dog.

But I shall have loved her, my little Topsy, as one only can love something close, familiar, and part of one's everyday life. And that is why, when her paws have stiffened, and her body has grown cold, and has been opened by others, to see inside, the better to understand what it was that doomed her, I shall have them bring back to my garden that which was Topsy. So that her substance shall dissolve in the earth that is mine, and at least be re-born—alas, but an illusory immortality—in the flowers, the grass, the leaves, nourished by my native soil.

SEPULCHRAL MEDITATION

WHEN you are dead, Topsy, I shall have you wrapped in a white sheet, and softly laid on a bed of fine sand, remote and deep in the clayey soil of my garden.

Then, if you cannot again know, in that eternal dark, when the sun shines, I, at least, may imagine that you hear, through the dark and the mould, my footfall, re-visiting you. . . . That is why I do not wish, you being dead, that men shall shut you in some box or coffin. Too well do I know what chagrin you feel, whenever some screen, even my door's, divides you from me. . . .

Men, you see, have always, throughout the ages, had burial manias for themselves. Have they not sought to pursue, beyond this existence—that only which is real—a second and phantom existence, including the body also, even though it moulder away in darkness. Thus, they have built funerary cities with houses and rooms, yes, palaces and halls for kings. Amid the sand, the rocks of Egypt, pyramids have risen, hypogea been hollowed out of the rock, to shelter the mummies of the Pharaohs. Alas! They but perpetuate death, these

proud sepultures, these caves, these painted mummy cases, these bands, these resins which immortalize not what lives but what is dead.

I shall have laid you deep, deep in the earth of my garden, on a bed of fine sand that only a few slight bricks hold together, that you may always sleep soft. You will sleep, as in the past, on your side, in your gold coat, and with fast shut eyes. But the infinite universe from which you emerged, will have taken you back. You might hear above you the patter of the rain, the rustle of the grass. The roots of the trees will twine about your body, and from your vanishing substance soon they will draw their luxuriant strength, in spring. For your body—I know, I must accept it—will disintegrate slowly: water, season after season pouring through, will carry away atom upon atom of your hair, your skin, your flesh, your heart, your bowels, and your brain. . . . But, if the thought pains me, if I think, at times, that it will be horrible for you, I am wrong! It is the old ineradicable disbelief in death, even to the death of the body: it is that disbelief, engenderer, throughout the world, of all the tombs in all the cemeteries, which moves me when I am hurt by this thought . . . No! When your last breath is exhaled, every vestige of life will have abandoned you: no more will

remain of Topsy, than that over which my thoughts mistakenly linger. . . . That is why, peacefully, I should think, on rainy or frosty winter nights, that you feel it not: that your body, dissolving thus, has at least submitted to the august law of Nature.

Thus, Topsy, for you, I shall achieve that free burial to which I myself am not entitled. Somewhere, very far from you, for me there will be a walled-up vault, and within, a double or triple sarcophagus of wood and of metal. And within, myself, with flesh set rigid, doubtless preserved by various poisons, that I may make the final journey that will bring me to this place. Such is the terrible custom imposed on poor dead humans.

You—so I live long enough—in dissolution will already wholly have merged into the earth of my garden. Only your bones, skeletally sincere, that unlike the hypocrite mummy, seek no denial of death, will rest upon that bed of sand, deep in the clay, which I myself have had made for you. Perhaps, some day, human hands, burrowing in the earth, will uncover your little bones. They will say, the men of those days, if the past at all interests them, that a pretty creature must have lived here. Or else, if lost to all finer feeling they will simply shovel your bones aside, mingled with earth.

Yet, in the deep shelter which I shall have had followed for you, it may be that nothing will ever disturb you again. The leaves, the grass, the humus of each year, will heap themselves ever higher upon you, separating you always a little more from the light, the bustle. Then, in the fine sand, your crumbling bones will remain, in alignment, preserved in their skeletal order, whilst the sun's heat fades from the earth. . . .¹

¹ "Sepulchral Meditation" is translated by Mr. John Rodker.

DREAMS OF PARADISE

I AM dreaming of a paradise, somewhere, where those we have loved here would be waiting for us.

But the paradise of the Christians, too hard and jealously human, repels me. Amongst the angels and the saints on their clouds, I should be cold. Some other mythological paradise must be mine, whence neither flowers nor trees would be banished, nor the animals of the earth.

There, when it was my turn to go, my father, young and healthy again, would welcome me coming through the trees and the ferns that he loved. By his side, in the meadow, amid flowers and butterflies, Topsy would come bounding along—Topsy, the little dog—my little friend, whom on earth he did not know, but who would have joined him over there.

She would come, oh, so happily, gilded by the rays of an eternal sun, and, nose uplifted, eyes staring into mine as in the past, joyfully welcome me in the Beyond.

And my mother, not far away, my mother whom I never knew, my mother the musician, under a canopy

of eternal foliage and amid eternal songs of birds, would smile upon her long-lost child.

All the friends I have lost would be there, talking in the grass, and would smile at my approach. There to welcome me, too, would be all the animals I have loved on earth, those of the house, as well as the wild ones of the forests, the birds of the woods, and even the fish of the sea.

There, by some divine action, cruelty would be at an end, an eternal manna would nourish the living; from there Death would be banished.



It is easy to understand that the Paradises which for so long human beings have dreamed of have sometimes seemed real to them. For desire is creative.

But I, I know that I dream, close to my little friend Topsy, who may be perishing here below. I know that the flesh is everything in life, that when the flesh is dead, the spirit is extinguished, were it the spirit of the greatest of men, or that of Topsy, the little dog.

I know that when my Topsy is buried under the ground, her spirit will no longer be there, nor elsewhere, that in the black mould there will be only

melting flesh, crumbling bones, and a repellent tangle of fur.

I know that all that will remain of Topsy, as, soon afterwards of myself, save the short recollections of those who have known us, will be nitrogen, and carbon, and water as well, which will mount up to the clouds, and that there will be nothing more.

SOFT HOPE OF SUMMER

THUS May and June have passed, swinging my heart, enamoured of Topsy, from despair to hope. And now, with these first days of July, the growth under Topsy's lip seems once more to be dissolving and disappearing.

Sitting by the meadow, I look at Topsy running happily in the grass—maybe recovered in spite of my mournful poems. And I think that up to now, it is only with ink and paper that she has been killed. Life, splendid and ephemeral, has taken her back into its sunshine, like the birds in the trees, or like me, this July.

Topsy, Topsy, Death will come! But, happier than I, you do not think of it. As in the past, forgetful of your ills and of their harsh treatment, you run, you bark at the birds, you lap the cool water of the basin; you awaken and want to go out early to run in the grass. You teach me a lesson, little ailing dog, perhaps already cured, who know better than humans that life is the present, and nothing but the moment that one lives.



AFTER MICE

BEFORE LEAVING FOR THE SUMMER HOLIDAYS

FORGIVE me, Topsy, if, without knowing yet whether you are really cured, I am going away and leaving you.

The summer is already declining, the sun sets earlier each evening. There is over there, Topsy, a place where earth suddenly ends, and where water for miles and miles extends—blue water that shines and sings. There, at all hours of the day, I dip in the warm surge, then, in the transparent shade of the pines that rise from the sand, I write and write.

In a few weeks, Topsy, I shall come back from over there with a tanned skin and a book you cannot read. But when I return, two months from now, at the beginning of the autumn, you will, doubtless, either be healed or doomed.

Forgive me, Topsy, for going away and leaving you. You must stay where you can be looked after, otherwise, I would take you with me. But, little dog, if you were a person—someone as near to me as you are—

duty, duty, you know, would force me to stay! So, forgive me for leaving you.

I must go because of my work, of my health. Nevertheless, yesterday, I returned from far, Topsy, on purpose to spend these few days with you, these youthful mornings of garden and sun.

You are right to love me, in spite of my coming departure, to jump up on me when I come out of the house in the morning; for I love you more than I have loved most humans, with your simple heart, your sincere way of loving and hating, of not lying, your character transparent and frank like a ray of morning sun.

You are right to love me, in spite of my approaching departure. For even if I were not to find you on my return, I should have given you, beloved little dog, yet one more summer. Other masters, as soon as they knew the nature of the swelling under your lip, would soon have condemned you to eternal sleep. You would not have seen the grass growing on the lawns, in May, in July; lying under the ground, you would already be decomposed flesh and scattered bones. I respected your short dog's life. I know that one summer for you equalled seven summers for me, and that if a god, one day, had to decide whether now to put me to sleep, or to prolong my threatened life, this is what I would

have chosen. You did not have to choose; the alternative was unknown to you; I chose for you; and so I gave you, Topsy, this summer in the sun.



But if you are to die, Topsy, I shall not be there. No one returns six hundred miles to watch a dog die—above all, as one knows that a dog's life can now be extinguished by slumber, and that they do not know, falling asleep, that on that day, for the very first time, they will never awake again.

That is why it is now, when you are apparently cured, and so alive, that I ask your forgiveness. Life is short for poor humans, but still more so for poor dogs. When two creatures on this earth, which time winds endlessly round the sun, have found each other, have loved each other, even though they be of different species, why must other affections, other duties, and work that a poor dog cannot understand, be strong enough to separate them?

SUMMER WISDOM

BEFORE leaving, I took Topsy to the god of the Rays. In spite of five years without metastasis or recurrence being, for malignant tumors, the classical delay before confirming a recovery, he says he thinks she is cured. And the persistence of this little life has illumined my garden to-day, and beyond that, nature all round.



But, should Topsy not die, she will have to grow old. Then her grace, before her, will die. She will lose her teeth—those teeth that are all the more fragile for having been irradiated, and some day, her eyes may lose their sight. Her body in any case, grown heavy, will no longer be able to bound in the ivy, as though shot upwards by her slim strong legs. Should Topsy not die, she will have to grow old.

Then faced by the ruin of her youth, I may think, some evening, that it would have been better had she disappeared in the full gracefulness of her vigour. The sight of her decrepitude will recall to my mind the old

saying and will make me wonder if Topsy's recovery were indeed a gift of the gods.



While I am writing, Topsy is lying by me in the grass, and she is far from philosophizing. She is tired after having run and jumped so much after the field-mice in the ivy. She is dreaming, maybe, under her half-closed eyes, of her evening meal.

Topsy, once more I listen to your teaching! The sky is blue, and the spreading perfume of the clematis embalms the air. Each of us is alive, Topsy, like those insects, look, flying in the sun, which, wiser than I, are not speculating on the alternative of death or of age! Yet, if the unavoidable alternative, because of you, moves me so deeply, that is because it is also my own. I too, Topsy, I, who seem to you an eternal goddess, must die or grow old. But, though I know it, I do not believe it, any more than you do, little dog. The beating of my heart seems to me, as to you, as though it must be eternal. And this evening, this summer evening, so fine, so blue, when I hope to keep you with me, I want to believe that you, that I, that the insects in the grass, that the trees in my orchard, will live for ever, and without growing old.

AUTUMN HOME-COMING

TOPSY spent the summer in the garden, in the North, while at the seaside, in the South, far from her, I forgot her a little.

But when the cold returned, and I was back in town, I recaptured, with Topsy, both my love for her and my anxieties.

The illness, the tenacious illness, that spells death, seemed again to be swelling her golden lip. How then could I rejoice in her thicker, silkier coat, or the glance of her two sweet hazel eyes?



I took her again yesterday to the god of the Rays. If this swelling of her lip is a relapse, which he cannot yet affirm, the illness will this time be without remedy. Topsy's lip cannot be irradiated again. Such was the sentence passed by the god. "Among the humans that we tend", he said in his slow and steady voice, "at least fifty per cent never recover. These are condemned to a horrible end. To kill them would be an act of mercy.

But one cannot. So—if I loved an animal as you love Topsy, I should leave her the benefit of being an animal. I would not torment her with cruel and useless treatments. I would let her enjoy the end of her life happily, and when she really began to suffer, I would administer euthanasia.”

Topsy understood nothing of the sentence passed by the god, and looked at him in a friendly way, wagging her tail. And Topsy was right to trust in him, since the god desired she should live her life in happiness to the end. A few more runs in the woods, the gardens, where, with the dead leaves, autumn descends, a few more good meals, and sugar that crunches in the teeth; then one calm morning to sleep and sleep. . . .

TOPSY BY THE SEA

THE swelling in Topsy's lip has suddenly dissolved. It was only an œdema caused by the rays. Topsy is probably cured.

Autumn is over, and now comes winter, and my Christmas flight to the sunny shores of the South. This time, I have taken Topsy with me.



She runs along by the sea, inhaling the wind and the storm. Topsy, Topsy, little healed dog, looking at you I am prouder to have almost magically prolonged your little life, than if I had written the Iliad.

You smell the washed up sea-weed. What does it say to your black nose? Surely it does not speak, as it does to my human eyes, of other shores beyond the waves that are, as here, caressed by the sea. But it speaks of a wider horizon, of other animals than those you know, terrestrial dog. Their aroma, yesterday unknown to you, teach you that elsewhere, in other surroundings, there are still other animals than those you

chase there, behind the railings, other animals than the chickens, rabbits, or cats.

Topsy, the greatest philosopher, strive as he may, will never know the visions which pass through your little golden head.

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At night, when outside the storm howls, and the rain from the sea whips the walls of the house, Topsy, lying on the tiles or the carpet, sleeps by me. In Paris and St. Cloud, she sleeps at the door of my room, but here, at the foot of my bed.

For the house, built on a level with the sand and the sea, has but one floor, and once thieves tried to break in. So Topsy is my guardian.

But she is still more! Topsy is my friend, my friend, who, in this different from my grown-up children, does not ask to leave me, to travel. This Christmas, my son is in the snow of the mountains, my daughter in the sun of the desert. Topsy lives and breathes in a radius ten yards around me, and cries to rejoin me as soon as I move a few steps away from her. Dogs are children that do not grow up, that do not depart.

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What will Topsy have loved when death comes to

take her away? What balance-sheet will death draw from her heart?

Topsy will not have loved little ones that depart, as her body obstinately rejected the life-giving approaches of the male. Topsy will not have loved, as women do, some husband or lover, nor will she have wept for them.

But Topsy will have loved good meals that do not deceive, runs in the fields, on the beach, or in the snow when in winter there is any, and the chasing of cats.

But Topsy, rather than chasing cats, than runs in the fields and in snow, rather than good meals, will have loved to sleep unsuspectingly by the friend whom fate also chose for her.

For Topsy's heart, when in my room she sleeps at the foot of my bed, all the same watches a little, and knows that, not far off, also reclining, breathes that magical creature, her supreme providence.

Who can reign completely, and in a lasting way, over a heart in this world? Would you allow me to, Topsy, faithful Topsy?



BESIDE THE SEA

TOPSY'S WHITENED HEAD

AFTER the long winter, spring is back again. In my garden, in the North, the grass is turning green again, the grass where, here and there, cowslips and primroses are pushing through. The cherry-trees are white with blossom; on the boughs of the big trees, everywhere, the young leaves, like green butterflies, open their wings between the flying and singing birds.

When the sun, between two showers, darts its silver rays through the thin foliage of the branches, they fall on the wet brown earth or on the ivy that richly carpets the underwood. But, at my side, as I lie at the foot of a big tree-trunk, they also fall on the whitened head of Topsy.

For Topsy's golden fur, formerly only white under the tuft of her large flowing tail, has, through the strength of the rays that saved her, gone white on her head. And Topsy, with her deep brown eyes, now resembles some "marquise" with powdered hair.

Some think she is ugly like this. But I love Topsy's

whitened hair which tells me, every time I look at her, that she is probably cured.



When, in days of yore, in the forests, man, still savage, hunted wild beasts and pursued his prey, sometimes the ancestors of the dogs must have come, once night had fallen, to look for the leavings of this prey. Their chops dripping with blood, they would regale themselves on the same flesh that, not far away, in some cave, the forefathers of man had devoured. Man, jealous of his prey, if he still caught sight of them at dawn, chased them away. Sometimes he pursued them; but, some day or other, he must have killed a mother by the side of her puppies and have taken them. Then, as they grew up, they learned to hunt with him, to share his cave and his meals.

Since then, oh Topsy, how many dogs have arisen, have run in the woods and the steppes, then have laid themselves down for ever to mingle their bones with our bones, in this same earth on which you are now stretched! And in how many places! For everywhere on this soil that bears us, where the sole of human feet has left its imprint, the imprint of dogs' paws has followed.

The races have varied, but even more than the races of man, the races of dogs: there have been Newfoundlands, bulldogs, greyhounds, alsatians and dachshunds, and, from the snows of China, the chow-chows, blue or red dogs, with thick hair and black tongues, like you, Topsy.

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In the bargain concluded in those times between man and dog, the dog sometimes had to pay dearly. For the easier prey, for the daily meal, how many blows? And the death of the dog which did not matter, when the master was tired of it!

Your destiny was not the same, Topsy. You have won in the prehistoric market! More than your meal, your home, and the petting; you have won the primordial weal; it is life that you have won.

Cruel man is sometimes good, and though he invented arrows and guns, yet he discovered the rays that heal.

It is the signature of this benefaction which may be read on Topsy's whitened head.

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Topsy's head has grown white, because last year, when the spring, as to-day, was beginning, Topsy was

fastened eighteen times on to the plank, then, on her head wrapped up in a hood, bombarded by mysterious rays. Already one of her teeth, the sharpest on the left of the upper jaw, has the top broken off. But the cells which were madly multiplying under her right lip have dissolved, and her lip is now flat. No longer does she sneeze, as she did then, by fits and starts, in the beautiful spring. The illness has stopped, life has continued, and, almost a year later, Topsy runs again, happily, amongst the flowers and the growing grass, in the same garden.



TOPSY'S WHITENED HEAD

TOPSY AND THE OTHER WORLDS

THUS, Topsy sees another spring, and runs among the daisies.

Do you know, Topsy, that I am back from a journey, a journey to a country far different from that in which we now are? Over there, there are plains which stretch out to infinity with corn, with flowers of all colours, and mountains covered with snow under an all-blue sky. But why go on? You don't understand me; to you, there is nothing I can describe. And even if you had come with me over there, Topsy, what would you have looked at? Neither the Atlas, nor the blue or pink convolvulus of the Moroccan "bled", nor even perhaps the Arab with his donkey at the side of the road; your eyes, your nose, your bark, would have been for the dogs and the cats alone.

Topsy is ignorant of geography; she does not know that on the other side of the walls of the garden of St. Cloud, and beyond the road that leads to it from our town house, there are many countries, many climates, infinitely varied: Asia, Africa, America, and not only

the snowy mountain slopes or the narrow shores of the blue sea where I once took her with me.



Topsy runs in the fresh grass among the daisies. She woke up in the morning when I myself got up; she went out into the garden, and went to rummage busily in the ivy for field mice. Then came back to sit by my side in the depths of the wood, her front paws solidly planted in the earth, her ears erect, open to the song of the birds in the branches and the sounds in the distance. But when noon struck, she ran from the bottom of the woods to the house near by, answering the call to her meal, her nice hot meal of meat and bread. In the afternoon the hunt for field mice was resumed, broken by long rests at my feet, until the evening bell called her to her second meal. Then, at last, when night had come, after a walk in the starlight or the moonlight with me, when Topsy, quite pale, slips through the high grass like an elf having assumed animal form, she went up to lie down, faithfully, as every evening, at my door.

The horizon of Topsy's day is confined to these narrow joys, like her narrow forehead between her brown eyes. Even when, in a month, Topsy's still youthful

body will call for a mate, Topsy's horizon will not broaden.

For Topsy obstinately and tenaciously refuses the male and will have to die childless.



Topsy will never have known, like most women, the joys and tears of love. Stranger to our sufferings, our pleasures, Topsy runs among the daisies like some prairie elf, and it is just that indifference to all that makes the glowing core of our lives that I love. Near her, I find rest from human beings, so wearisome, so heavy; she soothes me like the trees, the flowers and the grass. And when I stroke the silver-streaked hair of her little golden head that she stretches up to my caress, I feel something of the freshness one experiences when one inhales the scent of a flower.



Topsy runs amid the daisies, ignorant of the Earth, ignorant of Love. She runs amid the daisies ignorant also of Death.

The pity I sometimes feel for her is absent this morning. I love this tiny life which deems itself eternal, since

its running paws so cheerfully deny their inevitable stop, one day.

Topsy has forgotten that, last spring, just when the daisies in the morning sun, as to-day, silvered the grass, she ran in the meadows sneezing without respite. Topsy above all does not know, and did not know, the significance of that sneezing: the cancer under her lip and in her nose, which was going to kill her. A few painful hours tied on to a plank, with an unknown and terrible apparatus roaring above, these Topsy endured under constraint, but with confidence, because she was tied, and because she loved us, too. Then she forgot, and summer has passed, then autumn and winter, and now Topsy is probably cured, and will never know, in her new-born joy of living, that she touched, last spring, the frontiers of death.

For Topsy does not know that there is a country where she and I will go one day, whence no one returns, and that is darker than the darkest of nights. And I bless her for being thus, and for not knowing that which I, alas, do know.



TOPSY AMID THE DAISIES

RESPITE FROM THINGS HUMAN

My friends could be jealous of you, Topsy! For, in spite of all their affection, they could not offer me what you so freely give: respite from things human. When you appear, you do not tell me your sorrows in detail; if you have hurt your paw, one cry and that is all.

And above all, there is nothing in you of those mixed attitudes which are human, in which one loves and hates at one and the same time. You either hate, as you hate cats, frankly, totally, without measure; or you love, as you love me, sadly waiting by the door the moment I leave, and bounding with joy when I return.

ANIMAL SIMPLICITY

WHEN I go out at night, in Paris, on to my terrace to listen to the nightingale in the "Bois" nearby, I like, Topsy, to hear your little steps on the sand, close to me. I know, however, that neither the song of the bird nor the poetry of the moon touch your dog's heart; the terrace is for you but a hunting ground. Whereas I listen, entranced, eyes uplifted to the moon, drunk with the perfumes of the May night, to the song of the nightingale, you, your nose in the sand, obstinately snuffle after the traces of rats. And yet it is you whose company I most prefer. You don't talk, Topsy, nor do you trouble my contemplation by the recital of your woes, your quarrels. And, above all, you are yourself part of this nature which bears, rocks, nourishes, and kills, but which is not human! A fragment of life like the nightingale of the gardens and of the woods, you share with it in my heart the animal innocence. And I contemplate around us, Topsy, rising to the moon, the big motionless trees that surround the terrace. Only the vegetable simplicity of the big trees and the little flowers is more soothing than the nightingale or than yourself.



SPRING HAPPINESS

A SPRING NIGHT IN THE GARDEN

It is so hot this evening that my daughter and I have gone to St. Cloud to sleep in the garden. No wall opposes its density between ourselves and the sky. Breezes pass, fanning my face and closed eyes, breezes that smell of the grass wet with dew. And when I open my eyes a starlit penumbra dominates the dark masses of the trees around me.

Not far from me my grown daughter is sleeping. We are alone; one asleep, the other already dozing.

I think of her. What destiny awaits her in life? But the grass scents the air, the trees whisper, a bird sometimes wakes up in the undergrowth, with a little cry, then falls asleep again. And, in the grass, at our feet, Topsy is guarding us.

Substance of another lineage, like the bird, the worm or the insect asleep in the night of the wood, but more closely related to us, Topsy, like us, lives and breathes. But who will ever know the picture that the universe reflects in her animal gaze? What this calm night, for me an exalted poem, means to her?

* * *

Seated on your haunches, your fore paws proudly planted in the grass, your ears alert, you search the shade, Topsy, with your eyes. A dog barks in the distance: you raise your ears in that direction. A cat mews, and you scamper off into the wood. And you don't come back for a long time, hunting the fleeing prey between tree-trunks and bushes. The cat has taken refuge at the top of a tree and you bark and bark in the night.

Substance of another lineage than ours, Topsy, you doubtless come down from the wolves, which, in the woods, under the moon, howled as they pursued their prey. This night, in this peaceful garden in the surroundings of Paris, awakes in you the old atavistic instinct, whereas we women know, even out of doors, how to sleep at night.



I open my eyes towards the pale sky and gaze at a twinkling star. And I think then of the earth that supports my shoulders, whilst it is borne through space like a ship, laden with all the plants, all the animals of all the climates, travelling upon it like so many ephemeral passengers.

Topsy, now returned after her vain cat-hunt, is at

peace, and lies down near us on the grass. Topsy knows nothing of all this. Her universe is the wood near by and the patch of grass on which she is now lying rolled up to sleep.

My own universe is vaster. I can picture the climates of the earth, and even know a little astronomy. But what is that in comparison with the infinite? Not much more than the wood near by, the patch of grass on which we three are sleeping and which, to-night, is the whole of Topsy's universe.

TOPSY AND SHAKESPEARE

NO more than the infinity of space can Topsy imagine that other vertiginous ocean: the infinity of time!

I sometimes think of it, and fear and tremble when I ponder that each minute of time is like a tiny wave of the big surge that will some day swallow me up.

That is why, desperately, like a shipwrecked person clutching at a spar, I long to cling to some achievement, even of small dimension, which would carry my name afloat to the future ages. In this way, our only too real carnal mortality seeks compensation in the imaginary immortality of a name.



Topsy, more shrewd, knows nothing of this illusion, and it is she who is right. Of what importance to-day to Cæsar, to Shakespeare, are their names, their works even, since their brains have dissolved? And even if, in his work, a little of the creator's soul survives, at the end of the millennia accorded to the earth, this remainder of life would be also extinguished.

For who will read Homer or Shakespeare when there are no more human eyes? And even before, perhaps some other future men, of very different and unforeseen culture, will know them no more.

That is why Topsy, whose happiness is confined to the narrow limits of each day, is wiser than I, she who simply inhales the scented June air, whilst I strive laboriously to trace vain signs on this paper.

ON THE FRONTIERS OF THE SPECIES

TOPSY, should I die before you, my image, an uncertain phantom, will haunt you when you sleep. Now, when I am away travelling, sometimes, under your closed eyelids, you see the entrance door open, men come in carrying luggage, and amidst the luggage I appear. In the same way, if I were dead, sometimes in a dream you would think you saw me again. Then your sleeping paws stretched out upon the floor would quiver, thinking they were jumping after my skirt, and I should not be altogether dead if, in the memory of some few creatures, of the humans who had known me, and in yours, my spectre would thus survive. But, whereas my grandchildren—should I have any—even though they never see me, should they be born when I have passed away, will at least know that I existed, will set a name to my portrait when shown my picture—if you had small ones, Topsy, they would for ever be ignorant of my existence.

The vain immortality of the human name stops at the frontiers of the species, and Topsy's little ones, of

the dog that loved me so much, would to-morrow know no more than the birds of the woods, the fish of the sea, that I had existed. Should I leave my cupboards full of immortal writings—immortal for humans—for Topsy's little ones they would only be what they already are for the flies that dart through the room, for the flowers in that vase, and even for Topsy to-day: a worthless heap of the cellulose which men call paper.

REVOLUTIONARY JUNE

TOPSY, hark in the distance to the chant of the crowds. It is the French workmen clamouring for bread and leisure, which you, Topsy, get so easily. For there are poor humans, Topsy, who, when it is fine, as it is to-day, are not like you and me at this moment in a lovely garden full of leaves and grass, but who have to bang on sheet iron or rivet, in the metallic hell of a factory, hour after hour. Then they revolt, and sometimes go marching on the roads between the fields, or through the streets of the town, holding big red banners flowing in the wind, clamouring for leisure and bread, and also, Topsy, voicing their hatred of those like you and me who have bread and leisure.

That is why, Topsy, one sometimes reads in the newspapers of these men that it is not right to love your fellows, the dogs. They turn the love—truly often too exclusive—of some society lady for her lap dog, to derision. They are indignant, they jeer at her. But those, Topsy, who like your mistress, have large enough hearts to love you as well as humans, those who, like

me, have brought up two children, paying in this way their tribute to the race, in the name of what should they be deprived, when they are growing old, of the sweet restfulness coming from your hazel eyes and your golden hair?

When I have stroked you, am I not more apt to take up my work again, that work every one owes, in his way, to his kind? You are for me my luxury and my leisure, after which the work, as with the workman, seems easier.



Listen, Topsy, to the singing of the men receding, as they glorify yonder their banner of blood. You don't know what these cries, these songs mean: you hardly prick up your ears. No more than when the swallows fly with loud cries, very far, very high above the trees and the roof tops.

You don't know, Topsy, what stretches beyond over the walls of this garden and the present moment. You don't know that men can make revolutions. You are no wiser in this than was the humble dog, last companion of the queen Marie-Antoinette. You are as ignorant of human tides as of the tides of the ocean. And

the men who are marching, whose songs now fade into the distance, are to you just as foreign as the swallows flying to the zenith or the fish swimming at the bottom of the sea.

TALISMAN OF LIFE

TOPSY, when I am ill you stay at the foot of my bed. If it rains outside, or if the sun is shining, you stay near me, lying down.

Yet it is not exactly gratitude. You do not remember—actually you do not understand—what I did for you last year. You were ill, then, also, but differently, since in a week I shall be well again. You, Topsy, had under your golden lip that tumour which grows unrelentingly, until it suffocates the one afflicted by it, unless it be dissolved by magical rays. And it is I who, instead of allowing it to grow, or having you killed, as others would have done, took you to the rays which made it possible for you, Topsy, to see the spring this year, and now the summer.

I remember, when I was small, days of illness like these. I was no more ill than I am now, and yet I had to stay in bed. Then Mimau, my darling nurse, would not go out, and that alone was enough to reconcile me to my sickness. She stayed then, caressing me with loving hands and eyes, stroking me, giving me food and drink. And her presence alone told me—a child who feared

death, the same death that had taken away my mother—her presence there in the room assured me that death would not enter. Mimau was there, my illness would be slight, just enough to permit this sweet and warm rest in bed with her close by, and a truce to tedious tasks.

Mimau has long been sleeping under the ground in the woods, in Versailles, close to my parents. But my attitude towards illness has remained the same as when she looked after me as a small child. I bless the slight sicknesses that interrupt the tiresome and daily duties. And I like the truce of the long restful hours, contained in the limits of the days as is my reclining body within the limits of the walls of this room.

Since Mimau is gone, who remains with me when I am ill, without going out? My grown-up children are both absent these days and will not be back for a week. My husband will, of course, come faithfully to sit by the table there, at the end of the room. But he has his occupations and will soon have to leave again. As for friends, they come and go, each having his own life. Yet, whether people come or go, Topsy stays with me, her muzzle stretched out on the floor, framed by her paws.

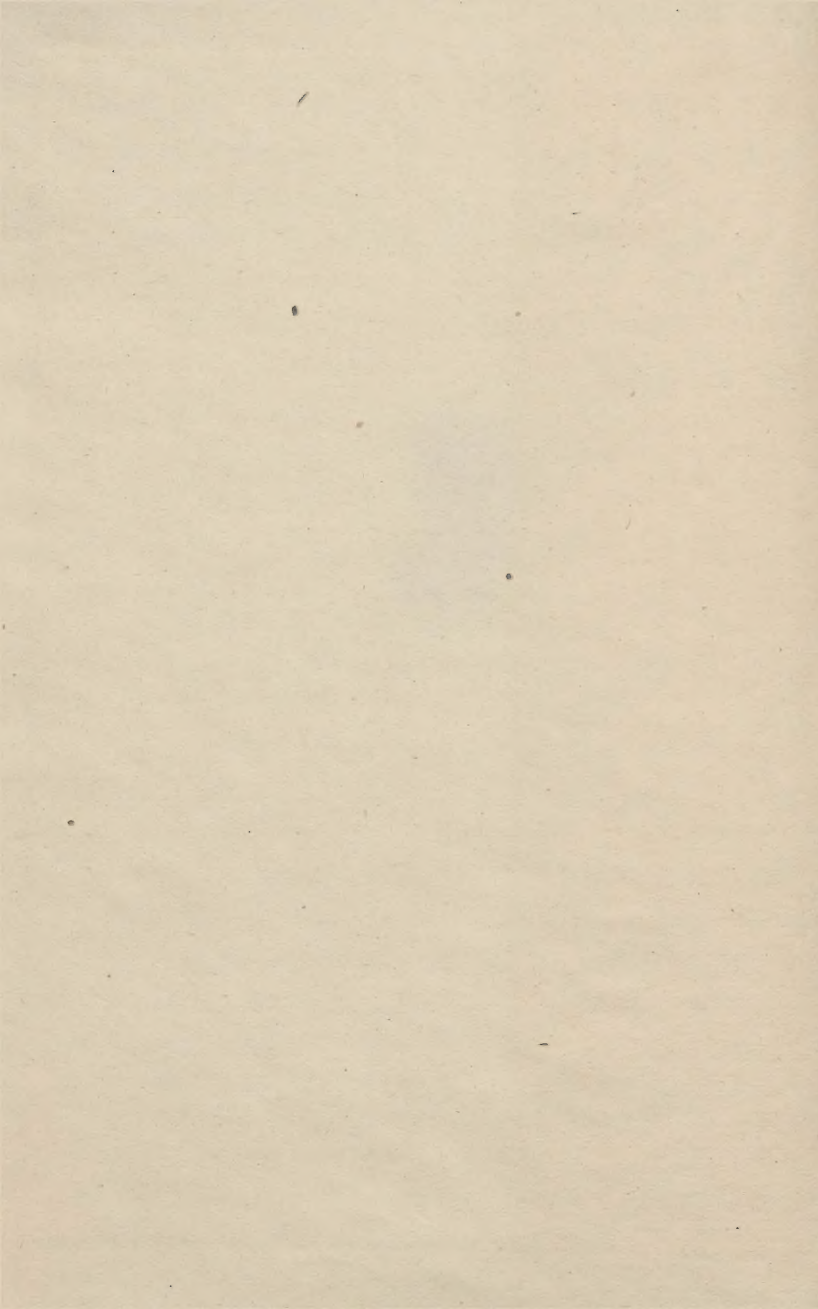
And as in bygone times from Mimau, a power seems

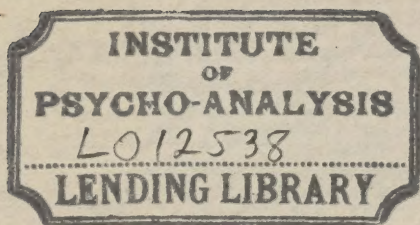
to emanate from Topsy, as from a talisman of life. Topsy who, thanks to me, has probably recovered from a terrible ailment, Topsy, who has reconquered life, is for me a talisman that conjures away death. A simple dog, lying there by me, just like Mimau by the child that I was, she guards me, and by her presence alone must bar the entrance of my room to a worse ill, and even to death.

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